Masthead Logo

The Palimpsest

Volume 49 | Number 12

Article 3

12-1-1968

Thanksgiving in Iowa

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Iowa had much to be thankful for in 1844. The population of the Territory of Iowa soared from 22,859 in 1838 to 75,152 in 1844. A steady flow of immigrants from the more populous eastern states had streamed across the Mississippi — upwards of two hundred German families from Hamilton County, Ohio, settling at present-day Guttenberg for the purpose of cultivating grapes. Although the Rock River country in Illinois had been heralded as the "most salubrious district in the west" the Dubuque *Transcript* noted a large cavalcade of Rock River farmers crossing the Mississippi in order to enjoy the "still greater salubrity" of northern Iowa. Before the year 1844 closed, a state constitution had been adopted at Iowa City and the six-year old Territory was asking Congress for admission into the Union.

At the end of the harvest season in 1844, the pioneers of Iowa realized that they had much to be thankful for. Recognizing the general attitude, Governor John Chambers drafted a suitable manifesto at his "Executive Office" in Burlington. Duly countersigned by S. J. Burr, secretary of the Territory, the first official Thanksgiving holiday in Iowa was proclaimed on October 12, 1844.

At the request of many of my Fellow Citizens, I have deemed it proper to recommend that Thursday, the 12th day of December next, be observed throughout the Territory, as a day of general Thanksgiving to Almighty God for the many and great blessings we enjoy as a people and individually, and of prayer and supplication for the continuance of his mercy and goodness toward us; and for the prosperity, happiness and ultimate salvation of the American people.

We are told that, "righteousness exalteth a nation," and are taught by divine authority that the voice of thanksgiving and prayer is acceptable to our Father in Heaven. Let us then, on the day designated, unite our voices, in the humble hope that they will reach the Throne of Grace and obtain for us a continuation and increase of blessings.

The appearance of this Thanksgiving proclamation two years before Iowa achieved statehood is both noteworthy and significant. It is significant because it revealed the religious bent of the Iowa pioneers as well as the New England origin of a considerable portion of the population. It is noteworthy because Thanksgiving was not a national holiday in 1844, nor was there any uniformity in the date of its observance among the few states that celebrated it.

The Davenport *Gazette* of November 21, 1844, believed that "former residents of New England" would rejoice to learn that Governor Chambers had introduced the "time-honored custom" west of the Mississippi. "May it long prevail with due observance," the *Gazette* concluded. The Iowa

City *Standard* of November 28, 1844, declared: "We believe this is the first Thanksgiving Proclamation ever issued in Iowa; we are glad to welcome the good old Pilgrim custom to our midst, and trust when the day comes around with its plentiful cheer, none will omit to send up to the Almighty Giver a tribute of praise."

Burlington celebrated Thanksgiving in a manner befitting the most populous city in the Territory. Most of the stores and commercial houses were closed and a "partial suspension" of business was generally observed. "During the day," declared the *Territorial Gazette,* "there was an appropriate celebration by the Sunday School scholars, under the management of their teachers; and in the evening the whole town assembled at the Methodist Episcopal Church, to listen to a most delightful entertainment of vocal and instrumental music, and an admirable lecture on music as a science."

Not all Burlingtonians, apparently, spent their time in this manner, for the Burlington *Hawk-Eye* noted that some engaged in "shooting deer and prairie chickens on the Bottoms" after which they "wound up" Thanksgiving by attending the ball at the City Hotel in the evening. The Davenport *Gazette,* which had expected appropriate church services, was shocked at such lack of good taste in Burlington. "We certainly misunderstood the intention of this day," the *Gazette* editor chided

the fun-loving citizens of Burlington and Des Moines County.

If John Chambers deserves credit for issuing the first Thanksgiving Proclamation in Iowa, his successor, James Clarke, may be credited with setting the date on the customary last Thursday in November. At the request of many "highly respectable persons belonging to the several religious denominations of the Territory," Governor Clarke designated Thursday, November 26, 1846, as a day of Thanksgiving. The people of Iowa, according to Clarke, had many things for which to offer thanks, including victories in the Mexican War.

Ansel Briggs, the first Governor of the State of Iowa, issued his first Thanksgiving Proclamation on November 1, 1847, designating the last Thursday in November as Thanksgiving. Good crops, health, increasing immigration, rapid strides in education, commerce, and agriculture, and the important victories over the "*semi*-barbarous" Mexicans were blessings Iowans could count in 1847. No other proclamations have been found during the remaining three years of Briggs's administration or the four-year term of Stephen Hempstead. In 1855, James W. Grimes set the fourth (not last) Thursday as Thanksgiving Day. Since 1857, Iowa governors have, with two exceptions, consistently appointed the last Thursday in November as Thanksgiving Day.

Presidential and gubernatorial Thanksgiving proclamations were subjected to editorial comment, both pro and con, facetious and serious. In 1859, the Democratic *Dubuque Herald* ripped Governor Ralph P. Lowe's proclamation to shreds on the basis of its literary style. In 1864, a Council Bluffs editor commented on the day of "fasting and prayer" set aside by "Father Abraham": "We notice the *fast* part was well observed, *fast* men, *fast* boys, and *fast* women, riding behind *fast* horses, going at very *fast* gaits, could be seen every moment dashing through our streets; and to conclude the *fast* day, Mynheer Koppes gave a *fast* ball in Street's hollow, to which nearly all the *fast* people, including Brick Pomeroy, No. 2, with that '*still* small voice' of his, went as *fast* as they could go."

Bitter partisan politics was in large measure responsible for many of the barbs aimed at the holiday during Civil War and Reconstruction days. At Dubuque the leading Democratic editor looked with foreboding upon the attitude of most ministers of the Gospel. "Thanksgiving day," he declared, "afforded a splendid opportunity for the display of diabolical piety by the Bloodhounds of Zion. Among the lesser lights of the political pulpit this display was made with remarkable unanimity, but they confined themselves principally to the usual invocation of John Brown's peregrinating soul, and diatribes upon the blessings

wrought by the slaughter of thousands of white men and the elevation of negroes." The Thanksgiving sermon of the chaplain of Congress was so vindicative that the editor felt sure the "Blessings promised to peacemakers will not enter largely into the awards of this fellow in the future world."

The editor of the Iowa City *State Press* of December 6, 1865, could not help but castigate the "hypocrites" who had brought about the Civil War. Upon reading the appeal of the Freedmen's Bureau that thirty thousand negroes would perish of hunger in Georgia alone, and forty thousand more in Alabama, the editor declared:

> While we would counsel the free opening of every charitable purse and heart, to the end that these poor victims of a mistaken and misguided philanthropy may be saved from starvation; yet we cannot repress our indignation at those canting hypocrites, who have emptied this vast load of misery and pauperage upon the country.
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> Before the Fall elections the radical papers were teeming with accounts of the prosperous condition of the Freedmen; then there were more white men than negroes in the South receiving Government aid; ERGO, the negroes were better able to provide for themselves than the whites.—Now when no political purpose is to be served by withholding the truth, they startle the country with the really heartrending statement that in two States alone, seventy thousand of these people MUST PERISH before spring. Five years ago these people, who are now dying by the wayside, formed the happiest, the freest, most moral and most intelligent portion of the African race upon the whole broad earth. But a beastly IDEA was born in the brain

of murderous fanatics, that the detention of these people in that condition of happiness and plenty, was the "sum of all villainies," a "relic of barbarism," and, to wrest them from it, the Nation must be plunged into a war, and a million of white men and six millions of treasure spent, that the well fed negro might taste the sweets of that freedom, which brings to him, starvation and death. And now, that happy community that had progressed under the tutelage of a system as old as organized society, until they were an example to their race, under the workings of an IDEA have become the most corrupt, degraded and helpless portion of that race. Because Lincoln issued a proclamation, bestowing upon these people the blessed (?) rights of prostitution, idleness, starvation and death, a monument is to be built over his tomb and chaplets woven to his memory. . . . Boston sleeps sweetly each night, and arises in the morning to fare sumptuously and prick its teeth and form plans of speculation for the coming day; it prays dolorously for the down-trodden and groans grievous amens to the political thunderings of its pantheistic clergy, while the victims of its foul philanthropy are left to starve; or to be supported by the already overtaxed producers of the West.

We would see no freedman starve, we would not counsel the withholding of any means that would ameliorate his condition, but at the same time we would hold up to the withering scorn they so justly merit those men who have placed it beyond the most strenuous efforts of charity to save thousands who MUST PERISH.

As the years passed editors refrained from such lapses into political partisanship.

Iowans took warmly to Thanksgiving, for nowhere else could the "Harvest Home" be more appropriately observed. Here was the richest

agricultural land in the entire United States. Here Indian maize quickly became the emblem of the State. Here wheat, oats, and rye grew in profuse abundance. Here luscious golden melons (especially Muscatine melons) won nation-wide attention. It was of Iowa, surely, that the poet sang:

Cart-loads of pumpkins as yellow as gold,
Onions in silvery strings,
Shining red apples and clusters of grapes,
Nuts and a host of good things,
Chickens and turkeys and fat little pigs,—
These are what Thanksgiving brings.

In 1870, a Des Moines editor printed the Thanksgiving menu of the Savery House. After observing that it was not customary to print such menus, he reminded readers that the "high reputation" of the Savery House was so "universally known" that nothing could be said to add to its reputation. It appeared in print as follows:

SOUP — Oyster
FISH — Mackinaw Trout, with fine herb sauce
BOILED — Tongue; Ham; Leg of Mutton; Corned Beef; Turkey, with oyster sauce; Chicken, with Marrinaise sauce
ROAST — Prairie chicken, with currant jelly; Turkey with giblet sauce; Veal, with dressing; Ribs of Beef; Sirloin of Beef; Mutton; Lamb; Saddle of Venison, with cranberry jelly; Sirloin of Buffalo; Goose, with apple sauce; Mallard Duck a la Creole

COLD — Corned Beef; Tongue; Mutton; Chicken Salad; Lobster Salad

ENTREE — Broiled Quail, with toast; Buffalo Steak, a la Maitre d'Hotel; Braized Teal Duck, with olives; Wild Goose, a la Regent; Pork and Beans, baked Boston style; Fillets of Chicken, a l'Anglaise; Belle Fritters, vanilla flavor; Haricot of Venison, with pastry

VEGETABLES OF THE SEASON

RELISHES—Pickled Beets; Worcestershire Sauce, Pepper Sauce, Chow Chow, French Mustard, Sliced Tomatoes, Tomato Catsup, Boston Pickles, Cheese, Walnut Catsup

PASTRY — Mince Pie; Old Style Yankee Pumpkin Pie; Steamed apple pudding; Lemon Sauce

DESSERT — Pound Cake; Sponge Cake; Swedish Pound Cake; French Cream Cake; Jelly Cake; Jumbles; Rum Jelly; Doughnuts; Blancmange; German Meringues; Kisses; English Walnuts; Filberts; Almonds; Raisins; Apples

TEA AND COFFEE

WINES — From the Savery House cellars

Sometimes Iowans partook too heartily of the bountiful Thanksgiving dinners placed before them. In 1874, a Keokuk paper reported that a physician was called to treat a young man who "worries hash at a fourth class boarding house" but who had accepted an invitation to dine out on Thanksgiving Day. The doctor requested his patient to tell what he had eaten. The young man, so the story ran, repeated the bill of fare as nearly as he could recollect, the following being an alleged inventory of the food encompassed:

"Three dishes of oyster soup, two plates of fish and two of turkey, two dozen fried oysters, and a dozen raw; some gherkins, four slices of roast pig, a quart of coleslaw, two cups of coffee, four stalks of celery, a liberal supply of boiled cabbage, six hard boiled eggs, some turnip, a glass of milk, apple dumpling, a bottle of native wine, two dishes of plum pudding, two mince pies, some fruit cake, and three dishes of ice cream." The physician, it was said, listened patiently through the recital of all this, then pronounced the case a hopeless one, recommended that a minister be called in, and went off to consult with the undertaker.

To many Iowans, the large turkeys of pioneer days proved a real problem. "I protest against so much Thanksgiving," said one housekeeper. "Here we had that turkey for dinner last Thursday. Every day since we have had his carcass for dinner, and warmed up turkey for breakfast and supper. Dressing has become a burden; gravy occasions weariness of the flesh; white meat and dark meat are alike unsavory." Two generations were to pass before the Americans learned to raise turkeys of a size that could be handled by the average family, even when augmented by Thanksgiving homecomers.

Many Iowans, especially college students, have at times been unfortunate enough not to be able to go home for Thanksgiving. In 1867, the students

at the State University of Iowa spread a festive board in the old chapel to make up for their absence from the home circle. According to a local editor the first part of the evening was spent in conversation while promenading around the new chapel. Shortly after 9 o'clock the whole crowd proceeded to the old chapel where an abundant Thanksgiving repast was served by the committee.

The report of the affair included the following comment: "After the feast came toasts and responses, but these ran to so late an hour we did not stay to hear them. The remains of the feast were distributed to the poor and needy — the cake to the editors, the cold chicken to the bachelor members of the faculty. A fine sense of the fitness of things was shown in this distribution. Editors are always poor and in need of supplies, and bachelors require all the comfort that can be derived from cold chicken, munched in solitude."

Many persons attended church on Thanksgiving and editors often reported on the sermon to their readers. When Reverend Mr. Magoun preached on "The Blessings of Hard Times" in 1857, several of Davenport's "most intelligent citizens" expressed a desire that the semon be published. At Sioux City in 1859, religious services were held in the Presbyterian Church in the morning and at the Methodist Church in the afternoon. The following year Sioux Citians held a union service in the Methodist Church on Thanksgiving.

Keokuk churches held both separate and union meetings in 1868. The Civil War was over, the negroes freed, Reconstruction was in progress, Andrew Johnson had been acquitted, and U. S. Grant elected President. The Reverend J. R. Effinger of the Unitarian Church considered the granting of negro suffrage in Iowa the chief cause for Thanksgiving in 1868. Although grateful for abundant harvests, Mr. Effinger was especially thankful for the great strides made in education. He praised the State University of Iowa with its "earnest and determined young men and women" who would return into the interior of Iowa "to make homes more beautiful and life more noble." He was equally thankful for that newly-established "Frontier University" known as "Iowa Agricultural College" which already had attracted young men and women from twenty-three counties, and he praised the fine work of Cornell College and similar "centres of instruction."

At the union service in Des Moines in 1870, the Reverend J. V. Schofield pointed out that some people placed their trust in science, others in knowledge, still others in reason, in philosophy, in wealth, in morality, in standing armies, or in government, but the Christian placed his trust in God. "A Christian people can thank God — as we do to-day — for a free government, no more slavery agitating our peace, and threatening ruin. We can render thanks for a growing unity in all sec-

tions, commercial prosperity, for decreasing national debt, credit and peaceful relations abroad with most nations. As a State we can render thanks for Iowa, the Indian name for beautiful land." Thanks could also be rendered, he thought, for Iowa's thirty-five million acres of rich, productive land, and for the position of leadership the State had taken in education. After pointing proudly to Iowa's 6079 school buildings and 12,000 teachers, her 53 colleges and academies with over 4000 students, Mr. Schofield turned to the 19 daily papers and 246 weeklies and to the railroads which crossed the State at many points. Finally, thanks were given for Iowa's almost unrivalled reputation for patriotism, integrity, temperance, and morality.

In addition to recording sermons, editors frequently wrote thoughtful Thanksgiving editorials. In 1890, a Clinton editor wrote:

> Very few people but feel like giving thanks for something. The living are thankful they are not dead, that is, if they don't wish they were dead. The sick are thankful they are not sicker. The rich are thankful for riches and the poor are thankful they are not poorer. The good are thankful they are not bad, and the bad are thankful they are no worse. Americans are thankful they were not born in Africa, and Africans are thankful they were born at all. The newly elected members of congress are thankful they were not defeated, and the defeated candidates are thankful they are permitted to live. We all should be thankful to the Lord for His many mercies and loving kindnesses.

Let no one forget today that God rules and holds the destinies of nations in the hollow of His hand.

It is the family dinner following church services that most nearly typifies Thanksgiving. In 1890, a Des Moines editor quoted the following from *Harper's Bazaar:*

> Soup, fish, salad, and *entrees* may be appropriate and elegant on 364 days in the year, but on the 365th let them be banished, and let the traditional turkey and his vegetable satellites, the toothsome chicken pie, and all the triumphs of the Yankee housewife, reign supreme. Let that national holiday be kept with national dishes, and let there be a joyful and honourable pride in them, with never a tinge of shame that their palatableness is not hidden behind French names.

The following day, on November 27, 1890, this same Des Moines editor declared in the *Iowa State Register:*

> This is Thanksgiving Day — one of the best days of all the year. It has a mission all its own and a blessing all its own to bestow upon all who open their souls to its beauty and good cheer. It should not be wholly given up to turkey and cranberry sauce. To eat, drink and be merry is a good way to give thanks — better than long prayers rendered with long faces, but it is not all that one ought to do to-day. A kind word kindly spoken to some one in distress; a worthy gift worthily bestowed upon some one more unfortunate — these are thanks acceptable on earth and in Heaven alike. . . . There is no man or woman so humble that their thanks to you for a gift bestowed to-day is not an incense that will rise to Heaven.

Such editorials did not fall on deaf ears. In

1896, for example, all business houses, banks, courts, as well as city, county, and state offices were closed. Thanksgiving was observed in the various churches and the Sunbeam Mission gave the poor a free dinner. "Dozens of turkeys, hundreads of loaves of bread, piles upon piles of all kinds of good things to eat were dished up with a lavish hand for those who would probably have gone hungry." In addition, Frankel's Clothing Company again showed their "big heart" for the poor. Between 9 and 10 a.m. on Thanksgiving day all the Frankel clerks were busily engaged providing poor children with three hundred suits of new clothing.

The spirit of the family circle has been immortalized by Lydia Maria Child in her poem — "Thanksgiving Day:"

Over the river and through the wood
To grandfather's house we'll go;
The horse knows the way,
To carry the sleigh
Through the white and drifted snow.

One Iowa editor felt the very mention of Thanksgiving brought back nostalgic memories of roast turkey, cranberry sauce, and hot pumpkin pie. "What a beautiful season it is with its home comings and its family gatherings!" he declared. "What tears of joy well up to the aged mother's eyes as she clasps to her heart one whom she has

not seen for so long, always her 'boy' though the snows of sixty years have whitened his head. What memories rise in the loving daughter's heart, as she lies down to rest again, after her long absence, in the room where she dreamed her girlish dreams!"

Nor should one forget the great work of our public schools in fostering the observance of Thanksgiving Day. Songs and essays, poems and plays, all formed a part of a moving pageantry whose stage setting was formed by the deep orange of the pumpkin, the red and yellow of luscious apples, by shocks of golden grain and stalks of corn. Sometimes the President's or Governor's Proclamation was read. Teachers were aided in the preparation of such programs by a manual for special days issued by the Department of Public Instruction. In 1901, the following "Program For Higher Grades" was suggested:

Song . . . . . "Thanksgiving Hymn"
Roll call . . . . . "Response with Quotations"
Reading "Proclamation by the President or Governor"
Reading
"Address to the Pupils of the Public Schools of Iowa"
Recitation . "Pen Picture of the First Thanksgiving Day"
Essay . . . . "The History of Thanksgiving Day"
Recitation . . . . . "The Landing of the Pilgrims"
Reading . . . . "The Founders of the Republic"
Recitation . . . . . "The First Thanksgiving"
Recitation . . . . . "The Turkey's Soliloquy"
Reading . . . . . "The Harvests of Iowa"

Recitation . . . . . "The Pumpkin"
Recitation . . . . . "The Difference"
Reading . . . . . "America's Public Schools"
Concert Recitation . . . . . "We Offer Thanks"
Song . . . . . "Nearer My God, to Thee"

Although participating in and gaining much inspiration from school prgrams, children particularly enjoyed the sports afforded by a snowy Thanksgiving. "Jack Frost has no terrors for young blood," a Des Moines editor declared. "Probably chillblains or possible sore throats annoy them not. All day they thronged the streets with sleds and skates. . . . The sight of the many coasters was enough to 'stir a fever in the blood of age,' although there will be many nights of watching by sick beds to follow their sport."

Many parents, however, were concerned over the disastrous practice of over-stuffing on Thanksgiving. In 1876, a mother urged the Des Moines Board of Education to return to the "former practice" of making Friday as well as Thanksgiving a holiday in order to allow school children as well as teachers ample opportunity to recover from "fearful" headaches and stomach aches. The logic of this argument apparently was recognized. In 1890, East Des Moines high school students gave school programs, offered presents which were distributed to the needy, and received Friday off.

Much of the general Thanksgiving activity de-

pended on the state of the weather. In 1857, the day was delightful in Davenport although walking was "juicy" for pedestrians; in 1864, the holiday was ushered in at Oskaloosa with temperatures that plummeted to 13° below zero. In 1874, a heavy Thanksgiving Day snowstorm in Jones County brought out cutters and sleds in Anamosa while "several hundred urchins yanked flyers around promiscously among foot passengers." In 1890, the weather at Clinton was so mild that lawn tennis, football, and hoop-rolling were common sports. Contrast this with 1876 when the weather was so "bitterly cold" in Des Moines that sleighriders withdrew from the streets leaving the capital city thoroughfares almost deserted. "John and Jenny," a kindly editor observed, "can't sit close enough together outside to keep warm on such a night as that was, and so they snuggled down by the fireside or hurried to some entertainment indoors."

There were plenty of indoor Thanksgiving activities for all the Johns and Jennys living in Des Moines in 1876. The Hawkeye Hose Company gave a dance at Turner Hall while the Centenary Church chose Thanksgiving for a colorful fair and festival. The colored Masons were not left behind, celebrating Thanksgiving by making merry in their lodge rooms. The "finest masquerade ball ever given in Des Moines" took place at the home of Honorable John A. Elliott. The gay assemblage

was clad in the costumes of all ages and included such personages as Little Red Riding Hood, the Daughter of the Regiment, and Henry VIII, Uncle Sam, Boss Tweed, and Buffalo Bill. At 12 o'clock all unmasked and repaired to the dancing hall above where merriment, laughter, and pleasure ruled until early morning.

Some folks would have been better off not going out to celebrate Thanksgiving eve, as witness the story of Aminidab Dobbletrop recounted in the *Iowa State Register* of December 3, 1876:

> The day before he had investigated his full share of a Thanksgiving fowl, eaten at the fashionable dining hour of six, and when the meal was concluded Aminidab wandered off to pass the evening with some other thankful companions. It's wonderful what an amount of praise and gratitude is developed by the tender breast bone of a turkey. Now Mr. Dobbletrop is one of those men that can't find time to be thankful more than once a year, and when the "sign is right" he is sufficiently grateful to answer for twelve months to come. He is grateful, and full in other ways. Thursday night he found his companions — Tom and Jerry, Moody and Sankey, old man Burbon, Udolpho Schnapps, and in fact all his cronies were there, and between them they rounded up the evening hours of Thanksgiving day until Friday morning was well along. Then Mr. Dobbletrop went home and retired to rest by the side of the feminine Dobbletrop, taking good care to keep his face turned away from her's. He had been out in the cold and was afraid she might take a chill from his breath.
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> Soon he slept, and sleeping he dreamed. In his vision he thought he had been changed into a turkey roost. Huge gobblers clutched their claws around the profile of his Ro-

man nose. Immense turkey-hens perched astride each ear and howled against his tympanum sentences concerning dressing and gravy. A film of salad covered each eye, great plump oysters dropped like tears from his cheeks, and celery sprouted like the horns of the behemoth from his forehead. He was smothered in gravy — a second Clarence. Dumplings engulfed him; mince pies threatened to overwhelm him, and plum puddings came rolling down imaginary mountains to crush him in an avalanche of sweets and raisins. He was sailing along a sea of schnapps. Suddenly a fearful storm came and wrecked his barque. There for hours he battled with angry waves of Tom and Jerry. Old Burgundy foamed in his smarting eyes; sour mash spirits rushed in a straggling tide down the Dobbletrop gullet. Gout and indigestion oppressed him. All of his remote ancestors came from under their headstones, armed with red hot pitchforks which they thrust into his diaphragm. He was stuffed and baked, his grandmothers for ten generations back basting his browning back with steaming gravy. All the turkeys that had been raised since the time when Adam plucked the first thanksgiving fowl from a sour apple tree in Mesopotamia and had a difficulty with Eve because he wouldn't pick up cobs with which to cook it, were piled on his breast. He clutched frantically at the heap, but was only able to pull out two handsfull of feathers before Mrs. Dobbletrop landed him on the floor, and he awoke to find that good lady's black hair in his hands and she caressing his head with his right boot. There was a bald place just back of her ears, and with careful thoughtfulness she had selected the right boot because the heel was gone from the left. Before Aminidab had completed his explanation his head looked like the Himalaya mountains after a severe fit of smallpox. He narrated his dreams in extenuation to Mrs. Dobbletrop, but she said he had gone to bed drunk, and that fancied turkeys wouldn't replace her dismembered scalp

lock. Next year Aminidab proposed to enjoy his Thanksgiving at home and sleep in the woodshed.

In addition to home, church, school, and the great outdoors with its varied sports, Thanksgiving afforded an opportunity for entertainment in the theater. On November 25, 1906, the editor of the Dubuque *Times-Journal* noted with pleasure that the Standard Opera Company would give a matinee and evening performance on Thanksgiving Day at the Grand Opera. Two of the "more tuneful" light operas — *Martha* and *The Bohemian Girl* — had been selected for production. Miss Pauline Perry was the prima donna whose "effective soprano" and "charming manner" had won the approval of the "best musical critics." Miss Clara Hunt, who appeared in the leading contralto roles, had received popular and critical praise in the Metropolitan Opera and in Europe.

The opera company was under the stage management of Cecil B. de Mille who, the *Times-Journal* declared, "comes of a famous theatrical family" and was an "efficient actor and singer." De Mille took "leading parts in the casts of the operas named." The management had provided its own orchestra and an outstanding group of singers and dancers. Truly, Dubuque was destined to have gala Thanksgiving entertainment in 1906. For more than a century Thanksgiving has been one of Iowa's best loved holidays.

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